MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

AUTUMN 1960

FRENCH ART: 1600—1800

The glorious history of France during the 17th and 18th centuries produced some of that country's greatest artists. To decorate the numerous magnificent buildings erected during that period, artists and artisans of all kinds were employed in large numbers. There is a remarkably close relationship in style between painting, architecture, and the decorative arts of these centuries which has seldom been attained at any other time in history. This is readily apparent in the art here described.

The Museum's acquisitions of French art of the 17th and 18th centuries, described in the following pages, have with one exception taken place since 1946.

We are indebted to the late Royce G. Martin, who gave in memory of his wife the beautiful and historically significant Sèvres porcelain manufactured for the powerful Rohan family. Mrs. C. Lockhart McKelvy gave *The Footbridge* by Boucher and *Cascades Near Rome* by Robert. All other paintings are the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey and were acquired with funds expressly set aside for acquisition of works of art by the terms of his bequest established in 1925. Most of the objects of art are gifts of his wife, Florence Scott Libbey, in memory of her father, Maurice A. Scott, under terms of her bequest established in 1938.

Otto Wittmann, Director

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AUTUMN 1960 ***New Series: Volume 3, Number 4***

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann.
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.

COVER: *Detail.* CHARLES-FRANÇOIS LACROIX. *A Seaport. Oil on canvas. 37¼ x 65¾ inches.*

JACQUES BLANCHARD. *Portrait of a Sculptor.* Oil on canvas. *37⅝ x 31½ inches.*

FRANCE: 1600—1800

The two centuries of significant French history which ended abruptly with the French Revolution in 1789 marked the emergence of France as the dominant political force in Europe, comprise the reigns of Louis XIV, XV, and XVI, were responsible for the physical appearance of great areas of the Paris we know today, and saw the erection of France's greatest palace, Versailles.

The period marked the end of feudal power of the French nobility and witnessed the dominance of the kings which culminated in Louis XIV's often quoted statement, "L'etat c'est moi" (I am the State). It also marked the emergence of the middle class as the most powerful sector of society—a fact which we tend to forget today. It was from this class that the kings chose their ministers and government officials; and with few exceptions the great creative minds in the fields of science and literature, art and finance were of the middle class. The wealth and power of France during these most important two centuries produced the great art discussed in the following pages.

For many years, no one could or even tried to separate the works of the brothers LeNain. Painting together in a common workshop, they themselves never bothered to differentiate between their respective productions, signing themselves simply "LeNain." All three were patient, accurate, and objective observers of peasant and lower middle-class life; all three found inspiration in their observations for classically modelled figures and geometrically ordered compositions. Instead of using contemporary figures as models for antique gods as was the current fashion, they took the elements of the style usually reserved for noble and mythological subject matter and used them to paint peasants. A simple and unapologetic monumentality untouched by ridicule or caricature lifts the realities of every day life to a level having meaning for all mankind. However as the quiet power of their works drew wider audiences, the admirers of the LeNains sought to identify the differences between Antoine, Louis, and Mathieu. Mathieu (1607-1677) was the youngest; profiting from his older brothers' experiments, he painted most easily and most elegantly. He preferred the families of small merchants and burghers to deep country peasants as subjects, and as can be seen in *The Family Dinner*, became expert in portraiture.

MATHIEU LE NAIN. *The Family Dinner. Oil on canvas. 32½ x 43 inches.*

NICOLAS POUSSIN. *Dido and Aeneas. Oil on canvas. 62 x 74¾ inches.*

Classicism is a prevailing characteristic of French art. In the 17th century the desire to weave the genius of Greece and Rome into the fabric of French culture reached its apogee. Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) is the master painter of this period. He reached Italy, the goal of all who would learn the secrets of the ancients, a mature man not ready to forget the formation of his homeland. Poussin made few copies of antique remains; he studied them, loved them, and absorbed their spirit into his own French nature. He peopled his canvases with beautifully modeled figures reminiscent of Greek sculpture, but glowing with the subtlest of flesh tones observed from life, not marbles. Though his compositions are ordered with brilliant logic, this logic is not a cold and final end, but a container beautifully constructed to show off the beauties of sun striking a golden helmet or the contrast of lacy foliage and smooth flesh. Admiring the heroism of ancient Greece and Rome, Poussin softened it with French charm and grace: Dido and Aeneas are a lovely woman and admiring man born anew in a poem that seems fresh and real, yet delights us most just at that moment when reality becomes elusive, vanishes, and we see that the poem is after all but a myth. This tenuous, febrile, and joyous union of myth and reality, this ability to hold us for an instant to the truth that they are indeed the same in beauty, is perhaps the soul of French Classicism. This painting was formerly in the collection of the Viscounts Scarsdale, England.

EUSTACHE LE SUEUR. *The Annunciation. Oil on canvas. 61½ x 49½ inches.*

The resplendence of Versailles so beguiles our imagination that it requires some effort to recall that many of the 17th century's most distinctive achievements in the arts and literature took place before 1660, in the age of Pascal, Descartes and Molière. In these years the rational, lucid French intelligence expressed itself in a painter such as Eustache LeSueur. His gracious *Annunciation*, painted about 1650, breathes that spirit of inward reflection, seriousness and tender piety which constitutes a peculiarly French religious sentiment. While LeSueur shows that he was acquainted with Italian Renaissance and Baroque ideas, he has transmuted them into a work instinct with the more reserved and classical taste of France. Sixty years of court magnificence profoundly changed the tastes of those wealthy Parisian financiers and merchants who were the patrons of LeSueur. Indicative of the new, more worldly and sumptuous taste are the furniture and portrait at the right. The furniture is discussed on page 81. The portrait is by Largillierre. Nicolas de Largillierre was born in 1659, and during a career that lasted until 1743 he not only made important contributions to French portraiture before 1700, but also helped to create the transition to the lighter style of the 18th century. The sumptuous portrait of Philip of Orléans (illustrated at right, oil on canvas, 57¾ x 45¼ inches) shows the nephew of Louis XIV, who was Regent of France from 1715 to 1723. holding a portrait of his mistress, Madame de Parabère. The Duke's studied negligence of dress and the frankly sensual character of the subject suggest private pleasures rather than public display and the atmosphere of a new era.

Claude Gellée, known as Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), was a French artist who derived his greatest inspiration from the countryside surrounding Rome. Claude and Poussin represent the two great tendencies in French classical landscape at a time when landscape painting was coming into its own as an art. Poussin's landscapes were generally heroic, motivated by moral themes; Claude's were idyllic and atmospheric, inspired by the bucolic poems of Virgil.

Landscape with Nymph and Satyr Dancing (oil on canvas, 39¼ x 52⅜ inches, dating from the mid-1640's) is a characteristic example of Claude's serene vision of the Roman pastoral scene. For him this countryside was not empty, but replete with memories of antiquity and peopled by sylvan gods and nymphs. Working in his studio from many sketches made in the Campagna near Rome, Claude combined them on canvas to produce a heightened sense of longing for the greatness of a lingering past. Unity of the various parts is achieved by air and light that penetrate the ruined temple, the trees, the bridge, and appear to flow through space without obstruction. Claude taught his viewers to appreciate the mute, poetic beauty of nature, which he discovered by means of his nostalgic imagination.

The portrait of Philip of Orléans on page 79 is appropriately shown with furniture in the early 18th century Regency style, transitional between Louis XIV's solemn magnificence and the fully developed Rococo of Louis XV. Balancing the weight and architectural forms of the older style with the airy fantasy and freedom of the nascent one, Regency furniture is singularly satisfying to the eye.

The chairs and smaller console (page 79), as well as the large Regency console table above, are superb examples of the famous French craft of carving and gilding wood, in this case oak. The console is among the 18th century's most typical pieces of luxury furniture. It was expressly designed to be placed against carved panelling, thus helping to unite wall decoration with other furnishings; the rich marble top carried a candelabrum, vase or piece of sculpture. The chairs, covered with charming designs in Beauvais tapestry, are exceptional for the dragons and picturesque heads of the frames. By coincidence the same motifs appear on both consoles, reaching a climax in the large table, within whose strong, carefully controlled composition passages of the most delicate low relief set off satyr heads and eight marvelously exotic, spitting dragons.

Small console: Ht. 34, width 50½ inches. Chairs: Ht. 45, width 27 inches. Console table: Ht. 34, width 72 inches. All about 1720-30.

Painter and friend of royalty and aristocracy, literary and theatrical figures, Maurice-Quentin de la Tour (1704-1788) brought the application of pastel-drawing to its zenith. Because of his popularity as portrait painter, the prestige of oil painting was threatened, and pastels were temporarily omitted from Academy exhibitions. His facility to render a portrait easily, and his ability to capture the qualities of the sitter initiated a long, unbroken career. His works can be divided into two categories: those submitted for exhibition or to a patron and those done for his own enjoyment. The *Self-Portrait* falls into the second category. All parts are arranged in conformance to the oval shape, and the well-modeled figure emerges from an atmospheric background, while all elements draw attention to his face. As with his other successful portraits, La Tour depicts himself in an informal pose, as if we interrupted an engaging conversation. Impudence and glib-tongued wit characterize the artist in this portrait.

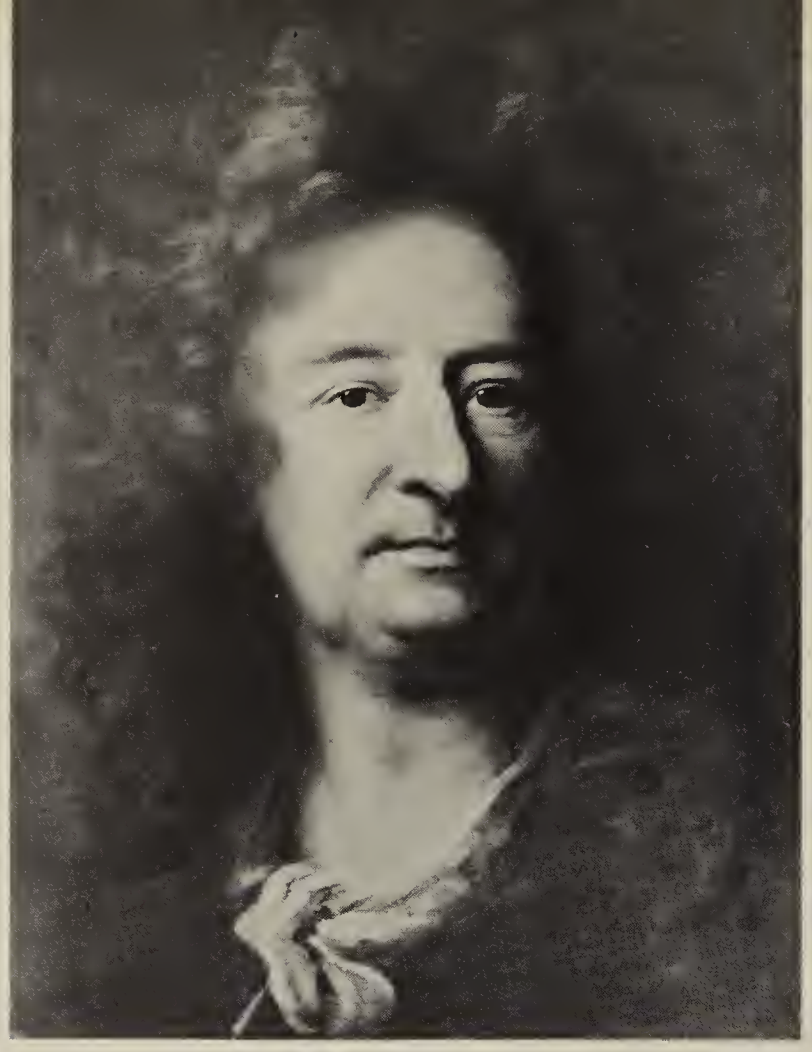
This beautiful deep blue Chinese porcelain, richly decorated with the highest quality of French gilt-bronze mounting, is at once evidence of Western trade with the Orient, and the high respect for Chinese art in France in the 18th century. The potpourri contained dried flower petals, the aroma of which served the same purpose as incense. Part of the design includes apertures around the rim of the bowl to allow the fragrance to escape. Features of this covered vase (Ht. 16 inches. About 1740-50) characterize the best of French decorative art of this period.

In France, the true writing table appears during the Regency Period. This one dates about 1720. Characterized by its clean, uncluttered surface and the placement of three drawers across the the front, the *bureau plat* was the essential piece of furniture in every study. In line with decorative tendencies of the period, the table (length 77⅛ inches) rests on curved legs, and is ornamented with masks and faces in gilt bronze at various points. The top is covered with tooled leather, the use of which supplanted the practice of covering the surface with a coarse cotton material called *bureau*, from which the French derived the word for desk.

Sèvres Oval Bowl: Ht. 7½ inches; Dessert Stand: Diam. 8 inches. Gift of Royce G. Martin, 1951, in memory of Mrs. Martin.

In 1771-1772 a magnificent Sèvres dinner service was made for a French nobleman, Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan. Panels of birds by Aloncle and Falot, specialists in decorations of this type, adorn the eighteen pieces in the Museum's collection. The rich turquoise ground, so characteristic of Sèvres porcelain, is enhanced with borders of tooled gold.

In the ensemble at right, the splendid wall panel is one of a pair executed by the renowned Savonnerie Works about 1730. The panels suggest the Seasons, Summer (112 x 88 inches) and Winter (111 x 86 inches, illustrated) and represent the works of skilled artisans executing a commission of Louis XIV. In soft, thick wool pile, a flowered portico hung with trophies dominates the yellow and blue background. Woven during a fifteen year period, these panels are among the finest 18th century French masterpieces. The commode, in the manner of André Charles Boulle, splendidly illustrates an important and attractive feature of the Louis XIV style of furniture. It is a harmonious blending of marble, gilt-bronze mounts, foliage scrolls, and ebony. Reflecting sumptuous Versailles, this commode (about 1710, height 35¼ inches, width 50 inches) represents the solid, monumental quality of Louis XIV style furniture. It is an interesting contrast to the pair of gilt-bronze wall brackets adjoining the Savonnerie panel. The sconces (about 1760, height 29½ inches) blend abstract, rococo elements and natural forms in a flame-like growth of exquisite grace.



HYACINTHE RIGAUD. *Portrait of Marquis Jean-Octave de Villars. Oil on canvas. 18½ x 14 inches.*

Recognized as the leading portrait painter of his day, Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743) was commissioned to portray the kings of France, Louis XIV and Louis XV, as well as royalty and noblemen from many other countries. The freshness and vitality of this study in oil is characteristic of Rigaud's style. Lacroix de Marseilles (1700-1782) was fascinated by the grandeur and immortality of Rome and combined monumental architectural elements from antiquity with exotic Turkish merchants and elegant French aristocrats in his imaginary *Seaport* (37¼ x 65¾ inches). Such a decorative work, glorifying as it does the prosperous trade with the Far East, would have appealed to many a French nobleman wishing to enrich his town house.

The Dance in the Park (oil on canvas, 44 x 57 inches) by Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743), is an important record of the gay and elegant life of the French nobles under the Regency and reign of Louis XV. Polite society, constrained by rigid court etiquette, often found release in the intimate pleasure party out-of-doors. Lancret excelled in this idiom of pastoral gallantries, a favorite theme of early 18th century painting, called by the French the *fêtes gallantes.*

Parisian society saw in such a painting an image of itself, brilliant and sophisticated. Consequently Lancret enjoyed an enormous vogue and was unable to execute all the commissions he received. It was the preference of the aristocracy for delicate color and exquisite decorative effects that motivated this representative of the rococo style. The picture is a large one for Lancret. It is unpublished, having been secluded for over a hundred years in the Rothschild Collections.

The Bathing Party by Jean-Baptiste Pater (1695-1736) suggests the aristocratic French attraction to diversions that breathed gaiety and informality into lives stuffily dominated by court etiquette. Pater, a pupil of Watteau in the early 18th century, excelled in expressing the French refinements of a life of ease and pleasure. The artistic taste dominating Europe at this time was essentially French taste, a liking and appreciation of works of art such as this outdoor tableau by Pater.

Pater's conception of a bathing scene in a shaded pool comes exquisitely close to being a pure genre subject, the depiction of everyday life and surroundings. Yet the idealized atmosphere shown in the painting suggests a way of life elegantly removed from the humble, sometimes coarse, subjects of the more common genre subjects. Kings and princes emulated the glories of Louis XIV's court, and a surging interest in collecting French paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts fashioned a wide French style in manners and customs. Formerly in the collection of Frederick II of Prussia, this painting (oil on canvas, 26¼ x 32¼ inches) remained in the Royal Collections at Potsdam until 1923.

All the graciousness and femininity of the French 18th century shimmers like the embellished trill of a harpsichord in François Boucher's (1703-1770) oil painting, *The Mill at Charenton* (44½ x 57½ inches). The subtle coloring and delicate brush strokes reflect the refined spirit of the artist and of his patron, Madame de Pompadour. Here on the banks of a stream, as if part of a theatrical setting, people go about their daily chores spotlighted and accented in an atmosphere which is restless and softly moving. Boucher was familiar with the bold dynamic sweep of Rubens, but he tempered such forcefulness to create a delicate balance of activity.

His concern for design is not unusual in an artist who was President of the Academy and First Painter to Louis XV. The taste which is reflected in this painting was born in the luxury of the Versailles court. Their refined and aristocratic taste cultivated elegant subject matter which was usually never very profound. It often followed Rousseau's desire for a return to nature. Boucher's mill was an actual structure near the junction of the Seine and Marne rivers in France. Quite apart from its function, to the people of the court dressed in their fine silks and satins, the mill suggested merely a rustic, pleasant spot to relax from the stiff courtly atmosphere. Formerly in the Rothschild collections, Vienna and Switzerland, the painting remained unpublished and little-known until acquired by this Museum.

In the late 18th century, connoisseurs treasured the intimacy and warmth of terra cotta sketches. They admired the directness of expression and the subtlety of modelling captured in the fleeting moment of creation possible in clay or chalk. Claude Michel (1738-1814), called Clodion, excelled in terra cotta sculpture. With Gallic clarity and wit, he fused into an individual style the serenity of ancient Roman marbles and the agitation of Bernini's Baroque figures which he knew from residence in Rome.

Clodion's delightful group, *The Seesaw*, executed about 1775 (Ht. 17½ inches. Formerly Rothschild Collection, Paris) shows a remarkable variety of movement and surface texture which reveal the deftness and assurance with which he used his material. The subject, combining references to pagan antiquity, the idealized naturalism propounded by Rousseau, and a certain amorous frivolity, typifies the attitude of an autocratic age which liked to clothe its deeper thoughts in a garb of light sophistication.

JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD.
Blind Man's Buff. Oil on canvas.
46 x 36 inches.

The youthful zest and gay nonchalance of a game—this was the life which Fragonard portrays in his early work, *Blind Man's Buff*. One of the most popular painters at the court of Marie Antoinette, he pictured its delight in such frivolity. The elegant costume and the studied rusticity of the scene are essentially a vignette of how the French nobility imagined themselves and their surroundings. Painted for the Baron de St. Julien about 1755, *Blind Man's Buff* was originally meant to be hung *en suite* with a second work, the artist's often-admired *The Seesaw*.

Fragonard, still a student of Boucher at the time, emulated his master's charming rococo style. His own fresh vitality, however, distinguishes this as one of the truly great paintings of the 18th century. The young girl steps forward, about to step off the platform where her teasing tormentors play. As our glance darts from place to place, it falls upon delicate surfaces and the sensuous colors sprinkled over them. From the left an arabesque of pink flowers sways toward the full, rose-colored silk of the girl's dress. A pale blue sky and the muted greens and browns of the garden cushion the gayer color. Suggesting the artificiality of stage setting, they enhance the whole painting's light fantasy.

CLAUDE JOSEPH VERNET. *Evening. Oil on canvas. 39¼ x 54 inches. Signed lower left: "Joseph Vernet f. 1753."*

Like his predecessors Poussin and Claude, Vernet (1714-1789) spent a great part of his life in Italy. Through Claude he absorbed the classical calm of the Italian landscape, but populated it not with nymphs and gods, but with rustic and seafaring types in the manner of Italian Baroque genre painters.

The 18th century dilettante, with characteristic desire for order, arranged natural phenomena in series and related them to human invention. In the ensemble on the opposite page, the still life *Musette and Violin* (34½ x 25¾ inches), painted in 1725 by Jean-Baptiste Oudry (1686-1755), is part of a series of the Four Elements and symbolizes Air in its representation of man-made devices that need air to function. Towards the end of the century, archaeological discoveries tended to replace the "far-away" of rococo exoticism with the "long-ago" of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. This trend is apparent in the furniture shown here. The clock (about 1775) has the popular rococo theme of Venus clipping the wings of Cupid with figures after the sculptor Falconet, but the form is a departure from earlier asymmetrical scroll fantasies. The feet, base, and decorative mouldings are static, poised, and employ a classical vocabulary of ornament. The candelabra and commode date from about the time of the French Revolution of 1789. These caryatid figures recall those of the Porch of the Maidens on the Erectheum of the Acropolis in Athens. The stern frontal poses of the otherwise sensual commode figures hint at Egyptian sculpture convention as well. Clock: Ht. 18¾ inches. Commode: Ht. 36 inches. Candelabra: Ht. 46½ inches.

FRENCH 17TH—18TH CENTURY OIL PAINTINGS ACQUIRED SINCE 1939

Blanchard, Jacques (1600-1638) *Portrait of a Sculptor*
Boucher, François (1703-1770) *The Footbridge*
Boucher, François (1703-1770) *The Mill at Charenton*
David, Jacques Louis (1748-1825) *The Oath of the Horatii*
Fragonard, Jean-Honoré (1732-1806) *Blind Man's Buff*
Lacroix, Charles-François (c. 1700-1782) *A Seaport*
Lancret, Nicolas (1690-1743) *The Dance in the Park*
Largillierre, Nicolas de (1656-1746) *The Regent, Philip of Orléans, with a Portrait of Mme. de Parabère*
Lorrain, Claude (1600-1682) *Landscape with Nymph and Satyr Dancing*
Millet, Jean François (1642-1679) *Landscape with the Woman of Canaan*
Nain, Mathieu Le (1607-1677) *The Family Dinner*
Nattier, Jean Marc (1685-1766) *Portrait of the Princesse de Rohan*
Oudry, Jean Baptiste (1686-1755) *Musette and Violin*
Pater, Jean Baptiste (1695-1736) *The Bathing Party*
Poussin, Nicolas (1594-1665) *Dido and Aeneas*
Rigaud, Hyacinthe (1659-1743) *Portrait of Marquis Jean-Octave de Villars*
Robert, Hubert (1733-1808) *Cascades near Rome*
Sueur, Eustache Le (1616-1655) *The Annunciation*
Tour, Maurice-Quentin de la (1704-1788) *Self Portrait* (pastel)
Vallayer-Coster, Anne (1744-1818) *Peaches and Plums*
Vernet, Claude Joseph (1714-1789) *Evening*
Vigée-LeBrun, Elisabeth (1755-1842) *Portrait of Countess Isabella Albrizzi*

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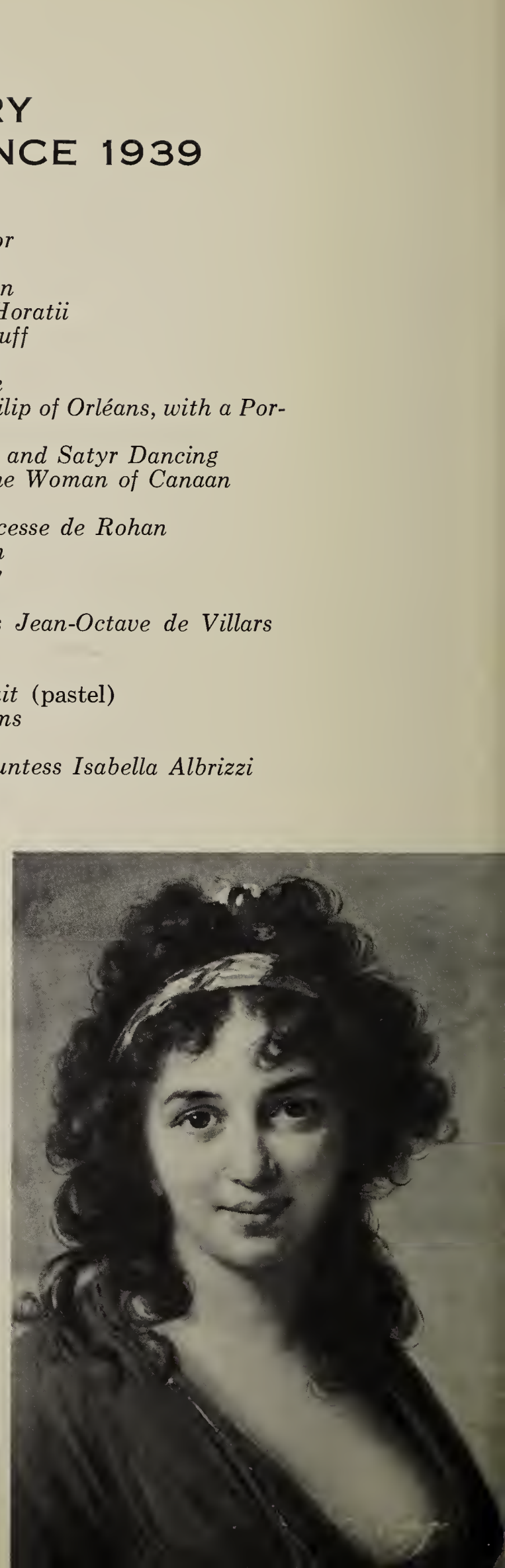

ELISABETH VIGÉE-LE BRUN. *Portrait of Countess Isabella Albrizzi. Oil on canvas. 19 x 13⅞ inches. Signed lower left: "L. E. Vigée Le Brun pour son ami De Non à Venise 1792."*

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One of the most splendid examples of 18th century decoration, this Savonnerie wall panel, depicting Summer, was woven about 1730. Bearing the Arms of Mérode-Westerloo and Czernin, noble families of Flanders and Bohemia, the panel also incorporates zodiac signs, flowers and gardening implements appropriate to the season.